DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 740 SO 031 799

AUTHOR de Cosson, Alex
TITLE The Hermeneutic Dialogic: Finding Patterns midst the "Aporia" of the Artist/Researcher/Teacher.
PUB DATE 2000-04-00
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 24-28, 2000).
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Hermeneutics; Interpretive Skills; *Reader Text Relationship; *Research Methodology
IDENTIFIERS *Derrida (Jacques); Dialogical Thinking; *Meaning Construction; Praxis; Reflexives; Researcher Role

ABSTRACT

This paper considers one researcher's challenge of marking his progress in reading/studying Jacques Derrida's "Aporias" (1993) by what he calls the continual hermeneutic of making meaning. The paper places the "Aporias" reading in the setting of a weekly research group whose research cycle was creating meaning in and out of the work being done and the continuing dialogues with(in) it. One of the paper's segments consists of an (inter)[texture]al performative to be read with an 11-minute video from a 1-hour studio/gallery session edited into approximately seven minutes with four minutes of visual contextual framing entitled, "(Re)searching Sculpted 'Aporia': (Re)learning (Subverted-Knowing) through Praxis." The paper details the researcher's notations from his research journal written before the video sequence at the end of the second week of the gallery exhibition in January 2000. It documents the researcher's difficulty in "holding the three hats of artist/researcher/teacher" to stay afloat--teaching three courses, doing research, and being in the "aporia" of his praxis. The paper concludes that, without the reflexive researcher role, the relationship of the praxis to teaching would be lost from the conscious equation, from the place where it really matters, from the why of the entire thing--what it is--how this triality artist/researcher/teacher connects. (BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

"Passionate knowers use the self as an instrument of understanding, searching for new methods to sophisticate the way the self is used in research" (Kincheloe, 1991, p.41).

ED 441 740

"But the question of knowing what it means 'to experience the aporia,' indeed to put into operation the aporia, remains" (Derrida, 1993, p. 32.).

By: Alex de Cosson
decosson@interchange.ubc.ca

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Alex de Cosson

"The hermeneutic dialogic: Finding Patterns midst the aporia of the artist/researcher/teacher"

The title that screamed one wakened night

The hardest part is non form
or formlessness.
Can we imagine or know this state of non being?
It is Deridas' question
"My death, is it possible?"
Yes/no/in-between:

SO 031 799

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The dictionary falls from the place/space - (s)p(l)ace -I had placed it moments ago after looking up 'syntagm' from, "where do we situate the syntagm 'my death' (Derrida, 1993, p. 23) as possibility and/or impossibility of passage?" not that it makes any difference to the aporia of reading Derrida. The denseness of the over-all, is far larger than bits of text taken 'out' trying to create meaning - the *continual* hermeneutic of meaning making.

I come back to the challenge of marking the progress through Derrida's Aporias (1993). I like the notion of the place of difficulty kept alive by the fact that I haven't got there - wherever there is. Reading it guaranteed placing me in/with aporia. Whenever I think I have an *opening* and I enter the text to pick a quote to 'hang it on', 'it' disintegrates. This 'it' is the same but different in both cases. The former is the paper as a concept, the latter is the 'hanger' *for* the concept. This constant destruction of the 'very heart of the matter' makes the project difficult but not impossible. Word-windows that Derrida seeks out, to work over and under, to find new ways around a (the) problem of aporia. Can I retreat from the mission? or am I driven on to find ways through the border land (Trinh, T. Minh-Ha, 1993) that is inherent in this space of not knowing/knowing (simultaneously).

I am
(researching)
the process
of my own doing

2.

I know a work
I don't know a work,
a metonymy
of place.
Remain hidden from vision
stay running ahead
or behind.
Needing its ambiguities
its betrayals
to stay afloat.

Even in aporia
I come to understand
its function.

3.

'I' wrote this, - (deeply) - I feel so far from it now, as though I have lost the point of entry - I am fighting something inside that will not let me be - that seems to want to hold me down, that does not want to let go - to let being be, as it were.

How do I (re) enter?

Find that pressure point

that spews out

guts

that allows for penetrated dialogue

with the place I'm to write about.

What is my mission?

in the here and now

I want to propose ...

I write

I want to write *in* the aporia

that my research places itself. In the point of disjuncture - when in praxis, while engaged in the pedagogy of the work that is sculpture - the place where *(my)* meaning becomes and belongs in its progression forward on the journey to anticipate meaning out of the curriculum of being that finds itself doing what it is called to do

without the second guesses

of all who wander aimlessly

in the twilight of the nights!

"Praxis is work that interacts with life and community concerns and is contextualized in human values. It is practice united with theory, subjectivity united with objectivity, action united with value" (Cary, 1998, p. 28).

.....

There was a point in our research group's weekly gathering where one significance, among many, was forced open - namely, the importance of the other. This 'opening' had its incubation while I attended a presentation on Self-Study/Action Research: Is it REALLY Research?, where Dr. Cynthia Nicol speculated that self-study wasn't so much about self as about the other, for without the other, the self was redundant. This circling from other, to self, to other, to create meaning finds a home in philosophical hermeneutics and phenomenology. When engaged with/in art it is in the circling from viewer, to art, to viewer that meaning is made. This hermeneutic that Susan Sontag called for as an 'erotics' in "Against Interpretation" is an engagement with the reality as found without the calling in of external meaning, it may be of a 'truth', a 'truth' to that moment, to that group, to that understanding as it manifests itself. This meaning is universally true to that moment, but this is the only truth we have and so we cling to it.

Our research group was in a research cycle of creating meaning in and of the work we were doing and in our continuing dialogue with(in) it. We were in the researching process of validating our doing as artists, through each other and our work.

For many art teachers their artist self is often neglected, hidden even repressed to conform to the 'norm' that is the teacher. That we were in the presence of research in our weekly meetings became abundantly clear to me as I enthusiastically cajoled a fellow group member, "You are doing research, you are because you are here and that is what we are doing" as s/he questioned labeling our work research, choosing instead to label it simply art making (feeling more comfortable in a familiar place) and not research (this more difficult

place in which we wished to dwell). For me it was the moment of being in and of 'the other'. In Hans Gadamer's words, I was "in the game"

As a seagull
lifts
effortlessly
from an angled white roof top
of my vision

I centre on meaning
recessed (gently)
(hidden) deeply
beneath
my sole

I know this is not where it might be, however it is at the *edge*, the point! To stop the current flap - for the flow to happen - not to shut down the process before it has begun!!

spaces (in)between
vibrant
places
of newness
embraced

as a child lights a flaming torch
(softly)
in a burning night

I want to be *in* that which cries out from deep within.

.....

The following segment is an (inter)[texture]al performative read *with* an 11 minute video from a one hour studio/gallery session edited into approximately 7 minutes with four minutes of visual contextual framing entitled:

(Re)searching Sculpted Aporia:

(Re)learning

(Subverted-knowing)

Through Praxis.

(segments of the video recording sound track are interspersed into the reading of the text) _

I envision a certain work I need to do -

I

see plaster & rocks -

(Today's work')

I see them wrapped and held

I see two becoming one

(Journal Notation, Morning, January 21, 2000)

The following notation is from my research journal written before the video sequence on the morning of January 21, 2000 which was the end of the second week of the exhibition:

I awoke this morning
with an image

bridging

-

a connecting
of one
to another.
I saw the wires connecting
from the large tower
to the smaller
tower.

as do the moments of reality when icy fingers clutch at my arm in the cold.

I shall use video to document the task as an action
I will document the reality
a moment of fulfillment
a vision/concept - constant since I started.
I
knew this part,
but I don't know the whole -

PAUSE

(The video volume slowly increases for my voice from the recording to interact with my reading voice. I say 'January 21' the volume then gently recedes and the reading text continues)

the whole must change in the moment of doing -
the whole is my dialogic with the work,
the research,
the rigorous being that contemplates the strategies for movement within a
predetermined
number
of coordinates
of action.

.....

(out of (text)ure[al] tape loop onto/into this paper)

I throw this on the pile of embers to en=rich the mix and challenge myself to go further with the language experiments and the art that makes it.

I envision flat lines of art
-research to be-
lying dormant

awaiting the call

I want my being subverted, tantamount to 'knowing' inside.

As though I might find an answer in the deepest depths that are soul.

How can I go deeper? How can I settle the quarrel once and for all, (impossible you quip) let us fly in light mind, as though angels (which we are) but how to get the light to shine always, not only in an abstract sense, but in the reality of the moment of *being*, to allow the spaces to open, to feel the pure joy of the sun as it passes over head, as though singing - allow birds to be singers - way up above

the formless universe

.....

The following notation is from my research journal written on the day ***after the action*** of January 21:

The hard part is to actually get over to the gallery and do the work before the entire day has slipped away in otherness

I place the video camera onto the tripod as I am doing this the concept for the work changes, I suddenly *see* the top of the broken figure as part of this 'work' - *Change Again* -

I dismantle the second tower, get out the work box that had been the 'middle' retrieve the working tools from its chest - spread them - order them - I feel comfortable in this praxis of body knowing -

20 years of sculpting has taught me my process

I'm conscious of the camera, I can feel its capturing eye - but I'm comfortable -

- I settle into the plaster work of joining the rocks - the plaster is doing what it should do -

I need to lift it - as I am wrapping under the rock - I balance it on the marble block and one of the plaster role boxes.

I need more plaster as I have finished the roll I am working with - I open the next box of plaster -

I cut - unroll
hold the figure in place -
dip and apply -
working as it should -
as I know by the feel that my hands understand before my mind does-

but very quickly I know the feel is wrong - this roll isn't isn't working right - I feel tense - I realize my body is not comfortable - I am very conscious that it's not working- the plaster goes pebbly - instead of visceral , tacky, with a slippery contact - as I know it with my hands - I'm holding the figure in one hand realizing this isn't behaving as it should - I am very self aware -

(In the following segment my voice-story runs faster than the visual - But I wish to have time to reflect back on the event as we are still witnesses to it.)

This is what I am always going on about in my studio classes.

- let go! -

follow the process!

-

as my mind races

'Just let it go!'

You can get some new plaster - come back later -

NO!

I want the figure on the rock.

But it is not working!

Let go!

Which am I to let go of?

The concept altogether?

The material not working ?

Go with the flow!

Which flow?

This isn't working!

Let Go - Find another way!

Yes, but if you just wait and get fresh plaster it <u>will</u> work really nicely -

I can feel the pull to stop - an equal pull to continue

to find the way through -

I try further down the in the plaster role, maybe it was just a bad section - but no same thing -

pebbly -

doesn't dry !

doesn't do anything -
I'm worried now - but equally
I will allow it to be -

Wire comes into play-
The piece grips and everything changes around it.
Suddenly it is working - the wire holds
it becomes the centre of the second tower -
the rest has to work for it now
Stamps, coin and cup are removed- too much baggage

I feel the need to write to that sp(l)ace - to write to the learning that has taken place as I've struggled to hold the three hats of artist/researcher/teacher.

I have learned how hard it is to stay midst these three, to stay afloat, with all in simultaneous motion. I'm teaching three courses, doing research, being **in** the aporia of my Praxis - that is what I want to focus on.
What have I learned about Praxis ?-
That art learning is through praxis - I (re) learned what I already know what we all know.

Praxis (re) shows me - (re) learns me through the moment of being in that sp(l)ace of not knowing - I (re)learned something I say all the time in my teaching - that it is in the letting go that we find, that we cannot be found until we are lost. Yes that is what I have learned - I learned, (re) learned what I know but forget or hang onto too lightly -

I remember vividly knowing the work before I started- I knew what I was going to do. I saw it. I wrote it. I (pre)wrote it - So I'd know or rather have a record of what I was going to do knowing it would change was part of my research agenda - to be in the aporia of my own doing -

It was so simple - I really did believe I was going to do what I set out to do - I had no notion nor sp(l)ace for a change outside the confines of the degrees of change that I was prepared for - - that once the material failed - well that was another thing - on one level I was not prepared to stay the course - -

I was (pre)programmed to believe that the plaster would operate as it always does - I truly was taken aback - not prepared -

I had to push myself through the moment of turning back - allowing the disrupter to become operative - to not allow it to dictate a ceasing of my work -

the power of that moment was a subversion to myself - a (re)learning - a (re)confirmation of what I know but equally what I forget -

or rather, without the (re)learning my teaching is merely rhetoric - without <u>praxis</u> it <u>is</u> mere rhetoric -

As a teacher without <u>praxis</u> I loose touch with what it is I teach.

Without the reflexive researcher role - the relationship of the praxis to teaching would be lost from the conscious equation - from the place where it really matters, from the why of the entire thing - what it is - How this triality artist /researcher /teacher connects.

.....

?

Where are the three neat plans?

want (ed)

Where are the three neatly laid out plans?

as though I know where I am going.

Instead

I do not know -

That I do not wish to know

a wish to travel

light

only to find that which turns up

as I run

through under brush.

as I find trees

full of saps

of life

I find trees

that call me

forward

Cling to the pedagogical ecology!

"The Line I trace with my feet walking to the museum is more important and more beautiful than the lines I find there hung on the walls" the Viennese architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser inscribed this on the wall of the KunstHausWien museum dedicated to his work.

This notion of the importance of the moment

of being *inside* the process of being

I shall present the studio process of art making that validates my embodied understandings through the pedagogical moments of being becoming.

"Don't go backwards,

don't turn away

from these messy secret tales

that no method can outrun and make all right,

as if they did not speak to us,

as if we did not hear them,

as if the agencies of the world

were always just our own"

(Jardine, 1997, p.165).

I awoke this morning
with an image

bridging
-

a connecting
of one
to another.
I saw the wires connecting
from the large tower
to the smaller
tower.

I am
(re)searching
the process
of my own doing

I know a work
I don't know a work,
a metonymy
of place.
Remain hidden from vision
stay running ahead
or behind.
Needing its ambiguities
its betrayals
to stay afloat.

Even in aporia
I come to understand
its function.

19

Bibliography

Cary, R. (1998). Critical Art Pedagogy: Foundations for postmodern art education. (From Critical Education Practice, Shirley R. Steinberg & Joe l. Kincheloe, Series Editors). New York: Garland Publishing.

Derrida, J. (1978). Writing and difference. (A. Bass, Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gadamer, H. G. (Speaker). (1974) What is philosophical hermeneutics? (Cassette recording No. RT 508). Toronto, ON: OISE.

Jardine, D. (1997). "Their Bodies Swelling with Messy Secrets" In T. Carson, & D. Sumara, (Eds.). Action research as a living practice. (pp.161-166). New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.

Kincheloe, J. (1991). Teachers as researchers: Qualitative inquiry as a path to empowerment. New York: The Falmer Press.

Sontag, S. (1966). Against interpretation, and other essays. New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux.

Trinh, T. Minh-Ha, (1992). Framer framed. New York: Routledge.